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SIPDIS

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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. London Bombings

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that on Monday, the delegation of senior Israeli officials to Washington officially presented Israel's disengagement-related aid request to the U.S. administration. The radio cited a White House announcement, which said that President Bush admires PM Sharon's courageous leadership and that the disengagement decision opens new opportunities.

Maariv and Jerusalem Post cited the news agency AP as saying that it had misquoted British Tony Blair's comment in an interview with BBC Radio 4, in which he allegedly linked the July 7 London bombings with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yediot, Maariv, and Hatzofe cited the German weekly Bild Am Sonntag, which quoted Mossad sources in Tel Aviv as saying that the Mossad suspects a link between the London bombings and the 2003 bombing of the Mike's Place pub next to the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. According to the sources, the same type of explosives was used in both cases.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that the diplomatic-security cabinet will today discuss the establishment of a new border crossing between Israel, Egypt, and the Gaza Strip. According to Ha'aretz, the new installation would be the first step of Israel's decision to withdraw from the Philadelphi route. Israel Radio reported that the chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Yuval Steinitz (Likud), and Knesset Member Dani Yatom (Labor) will this morning submit a petition to the High Court of Justice against the government and the attorney general on the issue of the stationing of Egyptian forces on the Philadelphi Road. Citing the opinions of senior jurists, they will ask the court to order the government to submit the changes in the peace treaty with Egypt to the Knesset.

Ha'aretz cited news agency reports, according to which EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana criticized Israel on Monday for the fence it is building around Jerusalem, and Palestinian PM Ahmed Qurei said it made a farce of efforts to restart the peace process. Leading media quoted Minister Haim Ramon (Labor) as saying on Monday that the Jerusalem fence is meant to ensure a Jewish majority in the capital, as well as to keep out terrorists, contradicting government statements that it is only a temporary measure. Leading media (banners in Yediot and Maariv) reported that Jerusalem's Central Bus Station was completely evacuated last night after suspected disengagement opponents placed a fake explosive charge in the building. Hatzofe quoted right-wing sources as saying that agent provocateurs had placed the bomb. Ha'aretz reported that one of the recommendations of an IDF document, which can be described as the army's "code of ethics" for the disengagement, is that security forces be allowed to open fire on evacuation opponents who endanger the lives of the soldiers and police only when "all else has failed."

Ha'aretz quoted FM Silvan Shalom as saying before the Tel Aviv Commercial Industrial Club on Friday that the Foreign Ministry will strengthen its efforts aimed at normalizing relations with Arab and Muslim countries following disengagement. The newspaper says that the

Gulf states, Pakistan, and Indonesia are among the countries the Foreign Ministry hopes will show increased openness toward Israel following the pullout from Gaza and northern West Bank. Yediot reported that Foreign Ministry Director-General Ron Prosor and Yaki Dayan, the head of the ministry's political desk, made a confidential visit to Morocco last week to discuss the resumption of bilateral diplomatic relations and a possible visit by FM Shalom to Morocco.

Leading media reported that on Monday, the Knesset passed a law, according to which assassinated tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi, who headed the far Right Moledet party, is to have his legacy memorialized through the work of a public institution. The law was approved in a 43-15 vote initiated by Moledet Knesset Member Aryeh Eldad and co-signed by more than 40 Knesset members. The legislation sparked a furor in the Knesset over the idea that the state would finance a center to spread Zeevi's idea of transferring Arabs out of the Land of Israel (i.e. Israel, including the territories).

Leading media cited a report submitted on Monday by the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute to the Knesset's Immigration and Absorption Committee, according to which, in 2006, for the first time since the state's establishment, the number of Jews living in Israel will exceed the number of Jews in the U.S.

Israel Radio quoted Javier Solana as denying, in an interview with the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram, that the EU is conducting talks with Hamas.

Israel Radio reported that two soldiers were lightly wounded today in the Gaza Strip when a bomb exploded at the settlement of Netzer Hazani in Gush Katif. Yediot reported that Israel has started developing a missile to be used against long-range rockets in possession of Hizbullah. Ha'aretz reported that over 400 immigrants will leave North America tonight for Israel on two specially chartered El Al flights. These are the first of eight flights of immigrants due to leave North America before the end of this year.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "When Tony Blair cites the conflict in the Middle East ('the Israeli occupation,' of course) as one of the three reasons for Islamic terror, he is no different from your common anti-Semite."

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz: "It is time for a second Balfour-type declaration -- a declaration that will recognize both the rights of the Palestinians in this land and the right to existence of Israel as the national home of the Jewish people. Tony Blair is the only statesman who can make this new declaration."

Veteran print and TV journalist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "When [the Palestinians] change their minds, and conduct flexible negotiations, the fence, and not only the Green Line, will be the foundation ... for a permanent frontier, because the fence is much more than just a fence."

Block Quotes:

1I. "Mistaken Culprits"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (July 12): "When Tony Blair cites the conflict in the Middle East ('the Israeli occupation,' of course) as one of the three reasons for Islamic terror, he is no different from your common anti-Semite. The vast majority of Arab affairs scholars and experts define global terror as a clash of civilizations. Religion versus progress, the forces of darkness against the forces of light, poverty versus affluence -- that sort of thing. Even after attacks more horrific than those in London -- New York and Madrid come to mind -- no one dragged the Jews into it. Oh, and Mr. Blair: with millions of Muslims in Europe, and England in particular, constituting a hothouse for mega-terror, how come you haven't taken minimal steps to guarantee the safety of your people? After screwing up like that, isn't it customary in your

country to step down?"

II. "Blair's Third Way"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz (July 12):

"Between the unacceptable route of the status quo [in Israeli-Palestinian relations] and the current treacherous route of the final-status agreement, [British Prime Minister Tony] Blair must carve out a third way.... It was the Balfour Declaration that gave shape to this land in the 20th century. Although many Arabs and not a few British citizens had reservations about it, it had a deep moral basis. And now it is time for a second Balfour-type declaration -- a declaration that will recognize both the rights of the Palestinians in this land and the right to existence of Israel as the national home of the Jewish people. Tony Blair is the only statesman who can make this new declaration. If he phrases it well and if he proceeds cautiously along the drawn-out process of realizing it, the imprint he will make in this land will be deep -- a true British seal of realistic morality."

III. "Separation and Fence Refuseniks"

Veteran print and TV journalist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (July 12): "No Israeli Arab ... would prefer to be a member of the opposition to Yasser Arafat or Abu Mazen in Ramallah instead of a Knesset member in Jerusalem opposing Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon. Everybody knows that. Now it emerges that many Palestinians feel just like the Israeli Arabs. About 55,000 of them were given a golden opportunity to free themselves from the crushing, oppressive occupation and to link up with their brothers in the West Bank.... True, it is not enough.... But lo and behold, with the help of the separation fence, we are beginning to dismantle the occupation, not only in Gush Katif, but also in the capital.... The [Jerusalem Envelope] fence, which [Vice Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert submitted to the government [on Monday] is the fruit of integrated, balanced thought, which effectively protects Israeli lives against Palestinian terrorism, while giving a more durable status to a judicious, unilateral political aim, which will exist so long as the Palestinians do not seriously mean what they say. In the future, when they change their minds, and conduct flexible negotiations, the fence, and not only the Green Line, will be the foundation ... for a permanent frontier, because the fence is much more than just a fence."

12. London Bombings:

Summary:

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "The West fears that extremist terror groups might lay their hands on a 'nuclear suitcase' -- commonly dubbed 'dirty bombs' -- but it turns out that the West has very good reasons to worry even before those weapons are being used."

Block Quotes:

"Wretchedness of the West"

Columnist Shaul Schiff wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (July 12): "Britain's conduct in the wake of the London bombings is plainly shameful. A power that is a G-8 member, with intelligence services that are considered excellent, sophisticated weapons, and so on, is unable to rescue victims from the underground in a reasonable amount of time. But it should be obvious to all that when Al-Qaida or one of its branches decided to hit Britain, it would go straight for its soft underbelly.... What is most worrisome in this whole affair is that there was no prior warning of the possibility of an attack. This means that all the intelligence forces of the West working jointly in the fight against terror haven't yet succeeded in penetrating the centers of radical Islam in order to obtain information about the movement of people and the possible movement of terrorists.... The West fears that extremist terror groups might lay their hands on a 'nuclear suitcase' -- commonly dubbed 'dirty bombs' -- but it turns out that the West has very good reasons to worry even before those weapons are being used."

KURTZER